



**INFRASTRUCTURE COUNCIL**



# Newsletter

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The Infrastructure Council is an initiative of the Illinois Chamber that brings together Chamber members with a focus on increasing infrastructure investments in a strategic and thoughtful way to boost the overall business climate in Illinois. Our focus is on the public and private systems that are essential to Illinois businesses.

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## **Illinois Chamber Joins Hundreds of Associations from Across the Nation in Letter to Biden Admin: Help Avoid a Rail Strike**

Yesterday, the Illinois Chamber partnered with 322 local, state and federal trade associations on a letter to President Biden. The letter urges the Biden

Administration to continue to work with railroad unions and railroads to avoid a rail strike. Provided below is the letter.

*On behalf of the undersigned trade associations, we are writing to you today urging you to continue to work with the railroad unions and railroads to ensure that the tentative agreement that you helped broker is ratified by the parties. It is paramount that these contracts now be ratified, as a rail shutdown would have a significant impact on the U.S. economy and lead to further inflationary pressure.*

*We applaud your Administration for leading on this issue from the onset. With your help, from establishing the Presidential Emergency Board to involvement in the direct negotiations among the parties, the tentative agreement was reached on September 15. We have seen six of the twelve unions ratify the agreement to date.*

*Unfortunately, we have seen two unions reject the agreement and there are concerns that others may follow. If that were to be the case, we could witness a strike that would shut down the entire freight rail system. Because the White House played such a central role in the process, we believe it can be helpful in continuing to move the process forward in a positive direction. Otherwise, Congress will be called upon to act.*

*We continue to urge that the contracts be ratified to provide stability and predictability to the system. Your involvement can only help make that happen and ensure there is no interruption to rail service.*

*We thank you for your attention to this matter.*

As you all are well aware, a rail strike at this time would have a detrimental effect on the Illinois and US Economy. We will join our partners in every industry to help stop this from occurring.

Read the full letter and view the list of undersigned organizations [here](#).

## **Groundbreaking for Forest Hill Flyover and 71st Street Grade Separation Projects**

Described in detail below, congratulations to our friends at CSX for the groundbreaking of this ambitious and critical project.

on Tuesday, Governor Pritzker joined Chicago Region Environment and Transportation Efficiency (CREATE) Program partners to break ground on the largest CREATE project, [The Forest Hill Flyover \(P3\)](#), to date at CSX Forest Hill Railroad Yard.

The groundbreaking also kicked off construction of the 71st Street Grade Separation (GS19) project, which will eliminate an existing grade crossing of the CSX railroad with 71st Street, improving safety and convenience for community members including pedestrians, bicyclists, and local drivers. These projects are also the first two components of four major projects that will be implemented as part of the 75th Street Corridor Improvement Project (75th St. CIP).

The estimated total cost for the Forest Hill Flyover and 71st Street Grade Separation projects is \$380 million. In 2018, the U.S. Department of Transportation awarded \$132 million to the CREATE Program partners through the Infrastructure for Rebuilding America (INFRA) grant program for the 75th Street Corridor Improvement and Argo Connections (B9) projects. The federal investment, combined with \$260 million in state, local, and private funding, will support the construction of the Forest Hill Flyover (P3) and 71st Street Grade Separation (GS19) projects.

The Forest Hill Flyover (P3) project will construct a bridge which will resolve one of the largest rail chokepoints in the nation and the most congested in the Chicago terminal, Belt Junction. By significantly eliminating conflicts between the Belt Railway Company, CSX, Norfolk Southern and Metra train service at this location, the flyover connection will also enhance freight fluidity and connect Metra's SouthWest Service with the existing Rock Island District tracks, increasing capacity and improving reliability. This north-south rail-rail flyover at 75th Street will eliminate conflict between 30 SouthWest Service Metra trains and 35 freight trains operating on the Western Avenue Corridor (CSX).

Metra trains cross freight train tracks at several locations within the 75th St. CIP footprint, including the Forest Hill Junction. During peak commuter periods only Metra trains are allowed to run in these areas. As a result, freight trains - and sometimes Metra trains - may encounter lengthy delays. This project will seek to remove those delays and increase fluidity.

The 75th St. CIP is the most complex piece within the overall CREATE Program and is a group of four projects that were advanced as a singular project due to their logistical and environmental similarities. This rail and roadway improvement project is located on the south side of Chicago in the neighborhoods of Ashburn, Auburn Gresham, Englewood and West Chatham along two passenger and four freight rail lines.

Read the full release on the project [here](#).

## **Legislative Update**

[HB 5828](#), **Catalytic Converters** was filed. This bill amends the Recyclable Metal Purchase Registration Law and provides that any recyclable metal dealer or other person who knowingly fails to record the purchase of 100 or more catalytic converters is guilty of a Class 4 felony.

[HB 5829](#), **CPI Motor Fuel Tax** was filed. This bill provides that an increase in the rate of tax based on the change in the Consumer Price Index shall not occur until July 1, 2023 (currently, January 1, 2023). Repeals a requirement that retailers of motor fuel shall cause a notice to be placed on retail dispensing devices. Effective immediately.

## **Illinois EPA Announces Two Funding Opportunities for Watershed Management Projects to Address Nonpoint Source Pollution**

Last Friday, announced \$4.5 million in funding through the release of two Section 319(h) Grant Program Notice of Funding Opportunities (NOFO) to address nonpoint source pollution. Illinois EPA is seeking proposals for watershed-based planning projects and watershed-based plan implementation projects to prevent, eliminate, or reduce water quality impairments to Illinois' surface and groundwater resources. Both NOFOs have been posted to the [Illinois EPA website](#).

Nonpoint source pollution is the result of rain or snowmelt carrying natural and human-made pollutants and depositing them into lakes, rivers, wetlands, and groundwater. It is estimated that over 60 percent of the national water pollution problem can be traced to nonpoint sources.

Illinois EPA receives federal funds from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency through Section 319(h) of the Clean Water Act to implement the Section 319(h) Grant Program. The \$4.5 million will be split, with up to \$750,000 in funding anticipated to fund two (2) to four (4) watershed-based planning projects, and up to \$3.75 million to fund 10 to 12 watershed-based plan implementation projects. These grants are available to local units of government and other organizations to protect surface and groundwater quality in rural and urban areas in Illinois.

Section 319 funds can be used for the development, update, and implementation of watershed-based management plans, including the

development of information and education programs and for the installation of best management practices.

## Session Update

As a reminder, the General Assembly has released the schedule for veto session. Lawmakers will be back in Springfield Tuesday, November 15 - November 17 as well as November 29-December 1.

View and download the veto calendar [here](#).

Looking forward, Legislators have been informed to keep their schedules open between January 4th-10th for potential lame duck session dates. We will let you know when those dates are finalized.



## Register Today: WC Conference

Workers' Compensation is an issue for all Illinois employers. Injuries can occur at any workplace and can include anything from lifting injuries to

falls and more. Illinois Chamber's Workers' Compensation Conference is designed to not only assist employers to stay in compliance, but also to provide tips and topics intended to help employers to reduce their workers' comp costs in the process. Make plans to attend the 15th Annual Workers' Compensation Conference on November 2, 2022 at the Doubletree Hilton in Lisle.

Infrastructure Council members receive a discounted rate of \$189 Early Bird rate by using the code Infra2022 when registering at [ilchamber.org/workerscomconference](http://ilchamber.org/workerscomconference) before October 23.

## **Articles of Interest**

[Theis sworn in as Illinois Supreme Court chief justice](#)

[Rural areas to get \\$759M in grants for high-speed internet](#)

[Dot Foods earns Great Place to Work certification](#)

[Illinois Chamber of Commerce still concerned about unemployment debt](#)

[New Poll: races tightening](#)

[A team effort](#)

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